

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A visual speech system, wherein the visual speech system comprises:
2 a data import system for receiving text data that includes word strings and
3 emoticon strings; and
4 a text-to-animation system for generating a displayable animated face image that
5 can reproduce facial movements corresponding to the received word strings and the
6 received emoticon strings.
- 1 2. The visual speech system of claim 1, further comprising a keyboard for typing in text
2 data.
- 1 3. The visual speech system of claim 1, further comprising a text-to-audio system that can
2 generate an audio speech broadcast corresponding the received word strings.
- 1 4. The visual speech system of claim 3, further comprising an audio-visual interface for
2 displaying the displayable animated face image along with the audio speech broadcast.
- 1 5. The visual speech system of claim 1, wherein the text-to-animation system associates
2 each emoticon string with an expressed emotion, and wherein the expressed emotion is
3 reproduced on the animated face image with at least one facial movement.

1 6. The visual speech system of claim 5, wherein the text-to-animation system associates
2 each word string with a spoken word, and wherein the spoken word is reproduced on the
3 animated face image with at least one mouth movement.

1 7. The visual speech system of claim 6, wherein the at least one facial movement is
2 morphed with the at least one mouth movement.

1 8. The visual speech system of claim 1, further comprising an input/output system for
2 receiving and sending text data over a network.

1 9. A program product stored on a recordable medium, which when executed provides a
2 visual speech system, comprising:
3 a data import system for receiving text data that includes word strings and
4 emoticon strings; and
5 a text-to-animation system for generating a displayable animated face image that
6 can reproduce facial movements corresponding to the received word strings and the
7 received emoticon strings.

1 10. The program product of claim 9, wherein an inputted emoticon string is reproduced
2 on the animated face image as an expressed emotion.

1 11. The program product of claim 10, wherein an inputted word string is reproduced on
2 the animated face image by mouth movements.

1 12. The program product of claim 11, wherein the expressed emotion is morphed with
2 the mouth movements.

1 13. An online chat system having visual speech capabilities, comprising:
2 a first networked client having:
3 a first data import system for receiving text data that includes word strings
4 and emoticon strings; and
5 a data export system for sending the text data to a network; and
6 a second networked client having:
7 a second data import system for receiving the text data from the network;
8 and
9 a text-to-animation system for generating a displayable animated face
10 image that reproduces facial movements corresponding to the received word
11 strings and the received emoticon strings contained in the text data.

1 14. The online chat system of claim 13, wherein each emoticon string is reproduced on
2 the animated face image as an expressed emotion.

1 15. The online chat system of claim 14, wherein each word string is reproduced on the
2 animated face image by mouth movements.

1 16. The online chat system of claim 15, wherein the expressed emotion is morphed with
2 the mouth movements.

1 17. A method of performing visual speech on a system having a displayable animated
 2 face image, comprising the steps of:
 3 entering text data into a keyboard, wherein the text data includes word strings and
 4 emoticon strings;
 5 converting the word strings to audio speech;
 6 converting the word strings to mouth movements on the displayable animated
 7 face image, such that the mouth movements correspond with the audio speech;
 8 converting the emoticon strings to facial movements on the displayable animated
 9 face image, such that the facial movements correspond with expressed emotions
 10 associated with the entered emoticon strings; and
 11 displaying the animated face image along with a broadcast of the audio speech.

1 18. The method of claim 17, wherein the mouth movements and facial movements are
 2 morphed together.

1 19. The method of claim 17, wherein the displaying of the animated face image along
 2 with the broadcast of the audio speech is done remotely over a network.

- 1 20. A visual speech system, comprising:
 - 2 a data import system for receiving text data that includes at least one emoticon
 - 3 string, wherein the at least one emoticon string is associated with a predetermined facial
 - 4 expression; and
 - 5 a text-to-animation system for generating a displayable animated face image that
 - 6 can simulate at least one facial movement corresponding to the predetermined facial
 - 7 expression.